

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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S E C R E T PARIS 37190

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-1

TAGS: FR IS UK

SUBJ: FRENCH CONVERSATION WITH BEGIN IN LONDON

1. ELYSEE INTERNATIONAL STAFF SOURCE TOLD US IN CONFIDENCE DECEMBER 20 THAT ELYSEE SECRETARY GENERAL FRANCOIS-PONCET'S MISSION TO SEE BEGIN IN LONDON LATE THAT DAY WOULD GO SOMEWHAT BEYOND FRENCH EFFORT TO KEEP ABREAST OF FAST-MOVING MIDDLE EAST SITUATION. GISCARD WAS ALSO CONCERNED TO ASSURE THAT REMOVAL OF LONGSTANDING FRENCH-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES KEPT PACE WITH RAPID EVOLUTION OF BEGIN'S POLICIES. OUR SOURCE SAID THAT WHILE TIME WAS NOT YET RIPE TO SETTLE DATE FOR BEGIN VISIT TO FRANCE, GISCARD WAS INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING THE SUBSTANTIVE FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH VISIT WOULD BE NATURAL RESULT.

2. WE NOTE THAT, SUBSEQUENT TO HIS MEETING WITH BEGIN, FRANCOIS-PONCET REPORTEDLY TOLD PRESS THAT BEGIN VISIT TO FRANCE WOULD TAKE PLACE IN "RELATIVELY

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NEAR FUTURE," AND THAT DATE WOULD DEPEND ON CALENDARS OF GISCARD AND BEGIN, AS WELL AS ON THE EVOLUTION OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.

3. COMMENT: GISCARD CLEARLY DOES NOT WANT TO BE LEFT AT THE POST IF BREAKTHROUGH IN MIDDLE EAST SHOULD BE IN THE MAKING. MOREOVER, PARTICULARLY AFTER INITIALLY COLD FRENCH GOVERNMENT REACTION TO

THE SADAT TRIP, WHICH BACKFIRED IN FRANCE, IMPROVEMENT IN FRENCH-ISRAELI RELATIONS WOULD NOT HURT HIS IMAGE IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS. FACT THAT FRANCOIS-PONCET'S ONLY PUBLIC COMMENTS AFTER MEETING BEGIN RELATED TO A VISIT TO FRANCE SUGGESTS THAT THEY DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT CONCRETELY AND POSITIVELY.

HARTMAN

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